

## X's and Olivia's: Un by goodgreycious

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**Summary:**

Steve Harrington was realizing a lot of things lately. About the world around him or mostly about himself. One thing he knew for absolute certainty is that he had never bought any of his previous girls flowers. Which is why he knew for certain he had never been in X's and Olivia's Flower Shop. He didn't even know Hawkins had a florist. Yet here he stood in front of the store with nothing but change in his pocket and sheer determination to make things right with his girl. Flowers were what you bought the girl of your dreams when they were pissed at you, right?

Or, the Flower Shop AU that no one knew existed.

Branch off AU story, pre 2x05.

## X's and Olivia's: Un

### Author's Note:

I came out of *Stranger Things 2* with a mighty need to write fanfiction. More specifically, about Steve and how he needed a break. 3,600 words later (and still more to come) here I am. I hope you enjoy my first foray into the land of fanfiction as much as I did writing it.

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Steve Harrington had realized long ago that he was most definitely an idiot for Nancy Wheeler. Call it the curse of first loves or actually ignoring some of the signs that were there since everything happened so long ago (see: a year), he was determined to make this part of his life go right. He may have been an idiot for Nancy, but he'd at least thought he would be smart enough to keep her.

Steve Harrington was realizing a lot of things lately. About the world around him or mostly about himself. One thing he knew for absolute certainty is that he had never bought any of his previous girls flowers. Which is why he knew for certain he had never been in *X's and Olivia's Flower Shop*. He didn't even know Hawkins had a florist. Yet here he stood in front of the store with nothing but change in his pocket and sheer determination to make things right with his girl. Flowers were what you bought the girl of your dreams when they were pissed at you, right?

*Olivia's* seemed non-threatening enough on paper. Then again, so had the whole town until last year. So had Nancy until he'd seen her shoot a gun. He shook those thoughts out of his head, ignoring the nagging feeling that reminded him he'd been having those thoughts earlier than what he had personally taken to calling The Great Halloween Disaster of 1984. The soft green exterior of the building was nothing if not inviting and if the two large windows on either side were anything to go by, their selection was more than large

enough for his needs. Instead of that weird fake buzz when he walked in, Steve was pleasantly surprised by the softness of the two silver bells signaling his entrance to the small establishment. He was hit with a million different odors at once and felt as confused and nervous as he did buying condoms for the first time. Just odd and out of place, like a virgin, trying to experience everything for the first time all at once.

The aisle in front of him looked like it would take him to the counter at the back, but there were also the big aisles to the left and right. Is this the part where he scans the aisles for the perfect thing to showcase his love? Shouldn't there be a big ass sign that says "THESE ARE FOR NANCY WHEELER?" Dazed and confused, that's what Steve Harrington was. And definitely still an idiot. And maybe a little bit out of his depth. And so very, very screwed.

"Have a little more faith in yourself there. Flower shops aren't meant to be as scary as that face you're making," a small voice in front of him said, apparently finally catching his attention and alerting him to the fact that his recent train of thought was said for the world to hear. She was a petite girl, a bit shorter than Nancy (a feat in it of itself), wearing white Keds, white wash jeans, a light yellow t-shirt and a green apron the same color as the outside of the building, the shop name emblazoned on the top half. She was carrying a bucket of water on her hip and her expression was curious. He was met with dirty blonde hair and dark hazel eyes as he finally reached her gaze. She had to have been the same age as him or close to it.

"Ah, there he is. Welcome back to Earth..." she trailed off. He still hadn't registered where this girl came from or that she was addressing him when he saw her eye brow arch.

"Jesus, I'm sorry. Steve. My name is Steve."

Her face morphed back into a happy expression that made him smile in return. "Well Steve, it's nice to meet my first customer of the day. I'd shake your hand but they're a bit full up. Walk with me back to the counter and we'll get you started."

She had turned away from him before he could do anything like blink

or even offer to carry her bucket for her. Instead, he just trailed after her like some kind of dog on an invisible leash. Or like a wanderer just following the North Star. She disappeared into what he assumed was the back room while his hip jutted out to lean on the back counter, content with the fact that he really couldn't do anything except wait for her. The shop's inventory boasted a beautiful color scheme ranging from deep and rich to soft and simple. He didn't even know this many colors existed. Hawkins sometimes had a tendency to make everything seem dull. He turned around again as he was met with the same girl from earlier as she came out from the back, trying to dry her hands on her apron.

"Sorry for not introducing myself. My name is Aimee and it's very nice to meet you Steve," she said holding out her freshly dried hand to him. He felt, rather than saw, some of the callouses her hand boasted as his larger hand seemed to encase her tiny one. *There's no way she could be old enough to have them, could she?* Her hand was cold, probably due to the water in that big bucket she was holding and working with. As she withdrew, he resolutely did not name that feeling in his head that wanted to make her hand warmer. He was here for a purpose. He was here for Nancy. Nancy, who was apparently with Jonathan. But here for Nancy nonetheless.

"So, what are you apologizing for? If my mom's calendar is correct, Snowball is still a solid month away and no man is THAT prepared," she laughed to herself as she sat on the small stool behind the counter and leaned forward. He looked at her teasing expression, which he noted was just that and not accusing in any way.

"How do you know I'm apologizing for something and not getting Mother's Day Flowers or trying to brighten up my Gramsy's house?" He whipped back, taking strange comfort in the new and light banter.

"Because you're too young and cute for that to be the truth. And Mother's Day is even farther away than Snowball. Which leads me to my previous point, no man is that prepared. So I'll ask you again, Steve Harrington," his eyes widened at the use of his full name and the compliment, "what are you apologizing for?"

"How the- how do you know my name?" *Especially when I've never*

*seen you before*, he added silently.

“It’s kind of hard not to know you, at least by reputation,” Aimee said softly, playing with her hands as she leaned forward on her elbows. “And I took a guess. I went to Talbot High, a couple counties over. I was friends with Cassie way back in freshman year when you played baseball for Hawkins HS.” His face morphed into one of recognition and then shame.

“Then you knew me at a bad time,” He said, reaching his hand to the back of his head in a nervous gesture. “Is she still pissed?” To his surprise, she laughed again, her eyes lightening up.

“No offense, but she wasn’t hard pressed for attention back then. And she was young, so were you. So don’t sweat it.” She smiled that soft smile at him again and he fought off a small shiver. It had been a while since he had been reminded of his less-than-stellar past with women, his “whipped” relationship with Nancy overshadowing it for the past year. He definitely remembered Cassie. They had slept together (his first time, not that anyone knew that besides him) and he had ditched her. As crass as it was, Cassie had just been collateral damage, the ruins of her small town life mere specks in the tailwind of his shooting star.

Desperate to change the situation and not wanting Aimee dwindle on his shortcomings for too long, he rushed to get out the reason he was here.

“I need flowers for my girlfriend whom may or may not have broken up with me.”

She laughed again and he found himself laughing with her. She sat up a little bit straighter and gave him the universal gesture for “take a deep breath and slow down.” He huffed out another laugh and mirrored her body language, finding himself relaxing and going along with it.

“I need flowers for my girlfriend.”

“Who may or may not have broken up with you.” He nodded, realizing how crazy that sounded. “I may have just the thing.”

She hopped, not so delicately, from the stool before regaining her footing and coming around to his side of the counter. He tried his best to steadfastly ignore her rapidly reddening cheeks and her refusal to look him in the eye as she made a bee-line for the walls and shelves of color. He also ignored the part of him that wanted to swell in affection for her slight embarrassment.

“So, what was the fight about?” Aimee asked curiously, leading him through the maze of the shop. He realized too late that it probably would have all come spiraling out of his mouth at that very moment, had she not come to an abrupt stop in front of him causing him to careen right into her back. His hands went to her arms to make sure they both didn't fall over. She didn't even seem to notice as she turned around, hands over mouth, looking even more flushed than before. “I am so sorry.” She started. “That is completely your business and not mine. Sometimes my mom tells me I'm too nosy for my own good. And I don't want to offend you, I just want to make sure we make this order perf-”

Steve stopped her the same way he stopped himself falling over, by grabbing onto her upper arms again. Only this time she definitely seemed to notice when it happened. If he was paying close enough attention to his own emotions, he would have acknowledged that part of him that actually wanted to tell her all those things. He was too busy focusing on making sure the wall of emotions that her question raised didn't show on his face. Things had been so tense and ugly with Nancy over the past couple days and he was doing his best to keep himself together. But he was hurt, and angry, and just so goddamned confused about how fast everything he loved was crashing down around him and how fast he could stop it. That's why he was here in the first place. To fix it all.

Without realizing it, his hands were rubbing soft upwards and downwards motions on the skin of her exposed arms. Oddly enough, it seemed to calm them both down. “Hey, it's okay. Remember that deep breath and slow down thing we did earlier? Let's do that again, huh?” She huffed out a laugh and tried to bring her hands to cover her face, but he caught them with his own, forcing her to look him in the eyes.

Bottom lip caught between her teeth, cheeks warm with laughter and bashfulness, hazel eyes trying to decide what color they wanted to be in the fluorescent light of the flower shop, the same callouses on her hands from earlier now almost intimately fitting into where their palms met... Those were the only things Steve could focus on in that moment before she flashed him a true smile that lit up his whole world, making him forget about anything else. Before she brought his crashing right back down to Earth again when she slowly and hesitantly untangled their hands.

*Nancy, Halloween, the fight, Nancy not loving him, anger, the other fight, sadness, Jonathan Byers, apologies, flowers, NANCY.*

They fell limply back to his sides as Aimee almost remembered her supposedly “proper” place in the story, just a friendly cashier helping out just another customer as they took up an awkward silence while she perused the shelves for what she was looking for. Steve almost wanted to say something, maybe bring back the easy banter from before. He refused to let himself fuck up this too (whatever this was). Not after everything else. He refused.

“You know, flowers weren't meant to solve all problems,” she said softly, breaking through his brain-haze. She was brushing the petals of some roses as they came to a stop in front of the biggest display of the flowers Steve had ever seen in his life. She was looking wistfully at them, like they held the answers to not only all of his problems, but all of hers too. Steve breathed in deeply, then released. Whatever was going on with him right now, he couldn't drag Aimee into it. He had to fix things with Nancy, figure out where they stood with each other, get his own life together before he thought about making Aimee apart of it in anyway. Not that he wanted to, not that he should, or whatever. But, his hand definitely did not want to entwine with hers again. Nope, not at all.

She looked at him, that smile of hers on her face, knocking him off his feet for the second time. “But they're a great start.” Steve couldn't help but smile back at her as the awkwardness faded. “You know flowers have this universal language? Without knowing it, you could say the loveliest or the cruelest of things without ever being the wiser.” He nodded at her as she gesticulated wildly with her arms

and her eyes reflecting the true passion she had for her surroundings.

“I wouldn't actually. Girls that I've dated- well, we never really reached the point of flowers,” he said, trailing off. Was he really that bad of a guy before Nancy? Yes, the traitorous voice whispered in the back of his head. “I'm a little lost, if I'm being honest.”

“Dad never brought your mom flowers for no reason? Never had bouquets of wild ones on your table growing up?” she asked, not judgmentally, and not near as probing as the last time, but genuinely curious, like she couldn't fathom anything less. He let a tragic laugh escape his lips and shook his head.

“Nah, I don't think my parents even remember they're married half the time,” he joked. Aimee's inquisitive look was back, like he was a question she was trying to answer. Or a piece of art she was trying to make sense of. She turned back to the display and picked up a dozen, beautifully deep red roses, and shook the water off the bottom gently. She brushed passed him, seeming to head back in the direction of the counter again.

“What about you?” he questioned, following quickly behind her.

“What about me?” She had placed the flowers on the counter and was flitting from place to place, gathering all that she was looking for.

“Your parents teach you about this stuff? You seem like you know your stuff. Your dad buy your mom flowers all the time?”

She stiffened minutely. So minutely that he wouldn't have caught it had he not been honed in on her since he first saw her. She turned back to him as she sat back on the stool across from him again, ready to do her job. “Yeah. Yeah, he did,” she trailed off, a sad smile on her face.

Desperate to change the subject and to get her to smile again, he asked more questions as she prepared his order.

Her favorite color was light pink, her favorite flower was a peony but



the smell of gardenias was the best, she was oddly into rock music and basketball, couldn't hold a tune for shit, danced for the first few years of her life and hated it, wanted a pet more than she wanted air to breath and was taking a gap year after graduating early from her old school for whatever reason.

"A gap year?" he questioned, as she started to roll the flowers in some brown paper.

"We had to move, and I had taken enough classes to let my high school graduate me a year early before my mom and I ended up here. We sort of had a lot going on, and when we finally got settled, albeit rather quickly, neither of us were really in a position to entertain the idea of me going off to school." Steve listened intently as she wrapped and finished his order with the utmost care. He probably could've sat and listened for hours more if she had let him, or he didn't have things to do, places to go, people to see, his goddamned life to figure out.

"Anyway, we were a very flower-friendly family and I convinced my mom to buy and open up this shop to do something for the both of us with whatever money we had left. We have more money coming in, we both get a place to work and come home to since we moved into the apartment upstairs, and I get a year or so to figure out my life before I have to uproot myself again." Aimee laughed a little at her plant pun as she tied the string tightly around his order.

"So, you're not thinking about college at all right now? Man, I can't get anyone in my life to shut up about it," he griped, thinking about the essay incident with Nancy that seemed like forever ago.

"My mom and I agreed that it was just too soon and too much to think about it when it happened. College is a lot, not just for me, for anyone. I think it should be something you commit to fully instead of feeling like you wasted the next four years of your life before you've even begun."

Steve's brow furrowed in confusion. No one had ever explained it to him like that before. Everyone thought he'd go off to college and be the golden boy there, just like he was here and grow up to be just like

his dad. Like his whole life was leading right back here to Hawkins. If the past few days had taught him anything though, maybe being the golden boy wasn't all it was cracked up to be. And when it came right down to it, he didn't want to waste his life doing something he hated and he definitely didn't want whatever resentment he had for the past few months to fester for longer than he had let it up to this point.

"You're making that face again," she said gently. She had an odd tendency of bringing him out of whatever daze he found himself in instead of pushing him deeper into it. He smiled for what felt like the first time in months. Boy, did it feel good. He turned to pull out his wallet, but before he could, she pushed the flowers towards him.

"This is on the house." He stared at her, dumbfounded, like she had just said she was going to give him a kidney. "Whoever she is, she's a lucky girl. And hopefully, she'll keep that smile on your face."

"You've given me a lot to think about Ms. Aimee," he said, taking the flowers from her. He felt, rather than saw, their fingers brush gently. A dull roar, compared to the symphony of earlier.

"And when you figure it all out?" she asked hesitantly, like she knew she shouldn't. And wasn't that the million dollar question. Steve looked at her thoughtfully, mind buzzing rapidly. Whether she knew it or not, the past half hour in *X's and Olivia's* had him galvanized. He was going to give these flowers to Nancy, they were going to talk it out. He was going to figure out the college situation. And that all sounded great. But until then, he shouldn't- no, he couldn't- bring Aimee down with him. Not when she had done more for him than she knew. She didn't deserve that. Or only half of his attention. He'd figure it all out for himself. And then maybe, just maybe, indulge in the pleasure of her company again... if he was lucky enough. Steve was going to get his shit together and now, he had a plan.

"I'll let you know," he winked as he turned around to leave and go to his car. He opened the door to the front of the shop and the silver bells tingled once again. For one last selfish second, he looked back at her, sitting at the stool like it was the only thing holding the world together and gave her a real and true smile. As it closed behind him and an older woman brushed past him to go in, all the thoughts from

before came flooding back to him so swiftly, almost knocking him back. Everything was dull again, the air as stale as it was before. Oh yeah, he had a lot to figure out.

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“Who the hell was that? Kid looked like he was about to go diffuse a bomb,” the middle-aged matriarch of the store said flippantly, with a warm smile as she headed back towards the counter to her daughter.

“Steve Harrington,” Aimee sighed, replaying the last half hour of her life, like it was one of those rom-com movies her and her mom loved so much.

“That's Steve Harrington?” Aimee nodded absentmindedly, rubbing her hands together, trying to recapture the warmth his hands gave her when they were. “Wasn't he the one with the abs that Cassie said you could bounce a quarter off of forever ago?”

“MOM.”

### **Author's Note:**

I took liberties for some things, but tried to be as accurate as I could. Please be kind and drop me a comment and/or kudo. I'm always open to constructive criticism!! There will be more to come from this story! You can find me on tumblr at [goodgreycious.tumblr.com](http://goodgreycious.tumblr.com)! Talk to me there to, I promise I'm nice.